



February 6, 2018
Delta Leadership Network Annual Conference 2018

Dr. Ken Tucker, President, University of West Alabama
Dr. JJ Wedgworth, Head of School, University Charter School

Sumter County, Alabama

- **Alabama Black Belt Community**
 - **County Population=13,040**
- **Common Black Belt Characteristics**
 - Overwhelmingly Rural
 - High poverty
 - High unemployment
 - Decreasing population
 - Predominately minority population
 - Low Educational Attainment
 - Aging population

Traditional Counties of the Alabama Black Belt



Role of UWA in the Community

- UWA's mission puts a “primary emphasis on that which meets the educational, social, cultural, and economic needs of the region”
- As a regional institution, the University's foremost commitment is to meeting the educational needs of the State and particularly of the West Alabama area.
- It considers among its clientele are high schools, businesses and industries, governmental agencies, and professional workers.
- In serving these diverse publics, the institution employs not only traditional means of delivery, but it also seeks to expand its use of innovative technologies, including distance learning, and networking with other educational institutions and agencies in order to more comprehensively address the needs of its region.
- Driving Question, “What is the one way UWA can really make a difference in this community?”

Why?

- To provide another alternative for innovative, quality education to families in Sumter County or those who would like to move here;
- To reverse decades of decline and positively impact economic and workforce development, job creation and quality of life for people in Sumter County;
- To offer another choice for families searching for educational options;
- To help create an environment conducive to recruiting business and industry to Sumter County;
- To establish an innovative, academically rigorous, diverse and safe educational opportunity as another choice within the larger educational system in Sumter County;

Why?

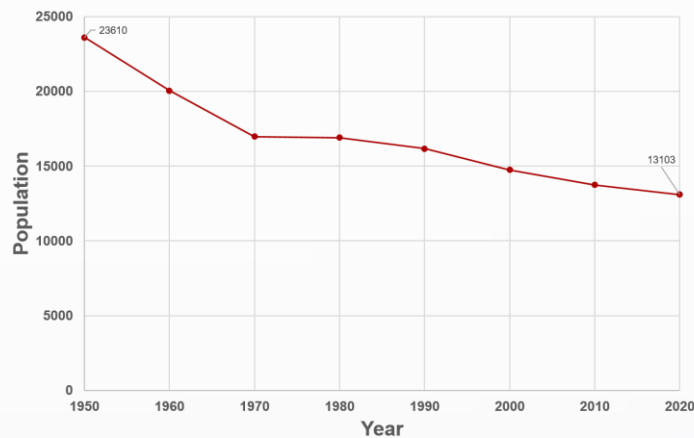
- To create a climate of inclusivity where children from all walks of life can learn together, work together, play together, grow together, and be successful throughout life together;
- To partner with the larger community in trying to improve opportunities for growth - educationally and economically;
- To further the mission of UWA and support its ability to recruit quality faculty and staff;
- To make a positive difference in the lives of those we serve; and
- To create something that has the potential to be transformative and serve as a model for other rural communities.

Sumter County Challenges (i.e., The Need)

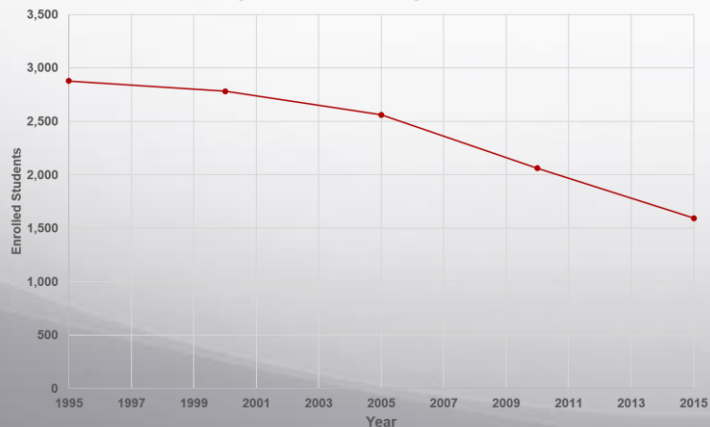
Sumter County has been **challenged** by the following:

- **Depopulation** – steady decline over the last 60 years

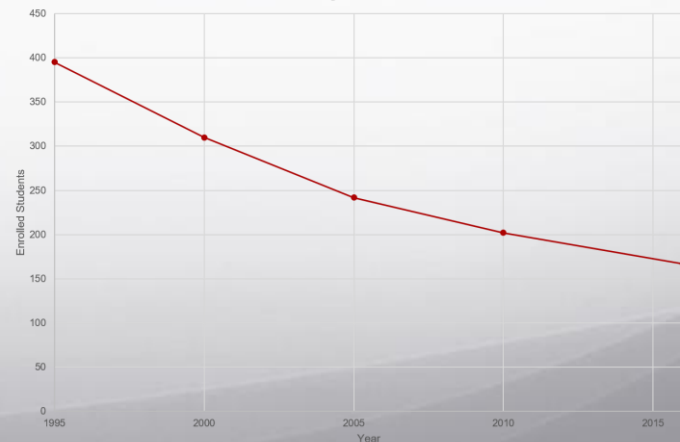
Sumter County Population Decline



Sumter County Public School System Enrollment Decline



Sumter Academy Enrollment Decline



Sumter County Challenges

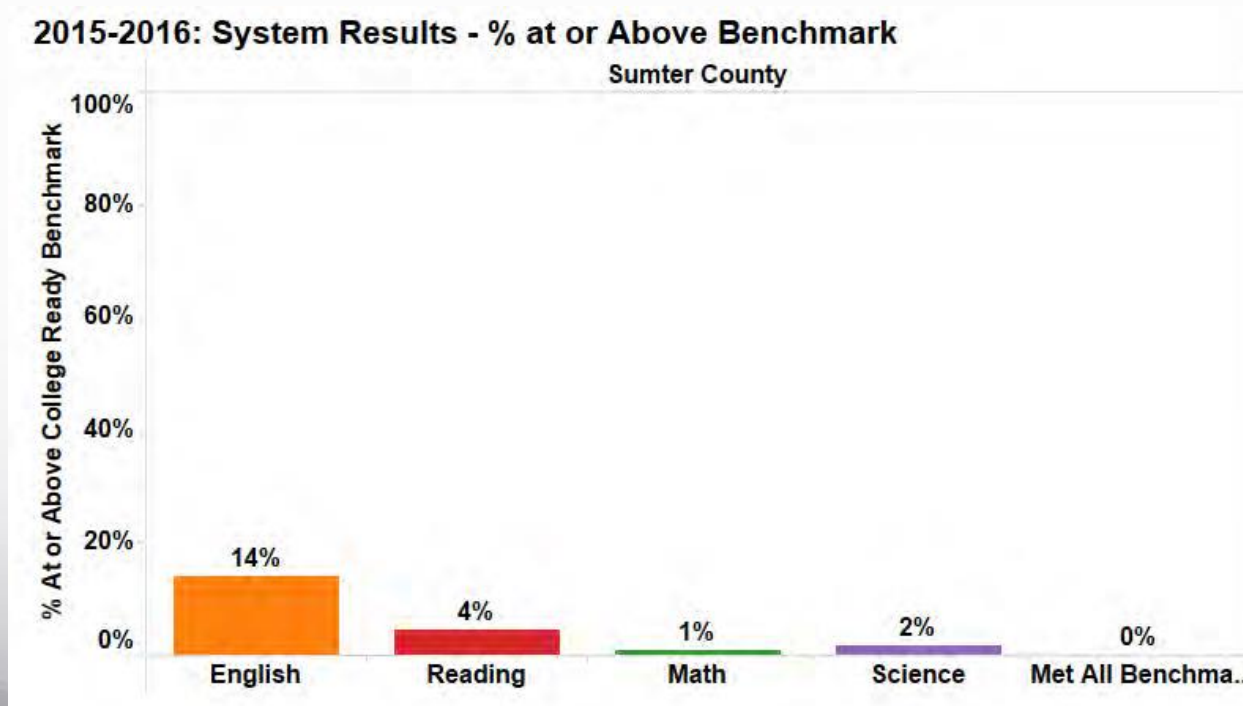
- **Decline in overall child well-being** (Voices, 2016)
 - Sumter County ranks 62 among the 67 counties in overall child well being (VOICES, 2016)
- **High Poverty Rate** (US Census, 2017)
 - 33.2% (Sumter County), 18.5% (State Avg.) ,13.5% (National Avg.)
- **High Unemployment Rate** (AL Dept. of Labor, 2017)
 - 8.6% (Sumter County), 4.6 % (State Avg.), 4.4% (National Avg.)
- **Low Per Capita Income** (Bureau of Economic Analysis)
 - \$12,887 (Sumter County), \$39,231 (State Avg.), \$49,571 (National Avg.)
- Loss of business and industry
- Skilled workforce shortages

Sumter County Challenges

- Increasing number of UWA faculty/staff that live outside of Sumter County, **currently 64%**
- Increasing number of students who live in Sumter County but do NOT attend school in Sumter County
 - 2,664 children ages 4-19 living in Sumter County (VOICES, 2016)
 - 1,736 children are enrolled in a school (public or private) located in Sumter County (ALSDE, 2016)
 - **Deficit of 928** students who are either enrolled in a school system outside of Sumter County or are not enrolled in school for various reasons.

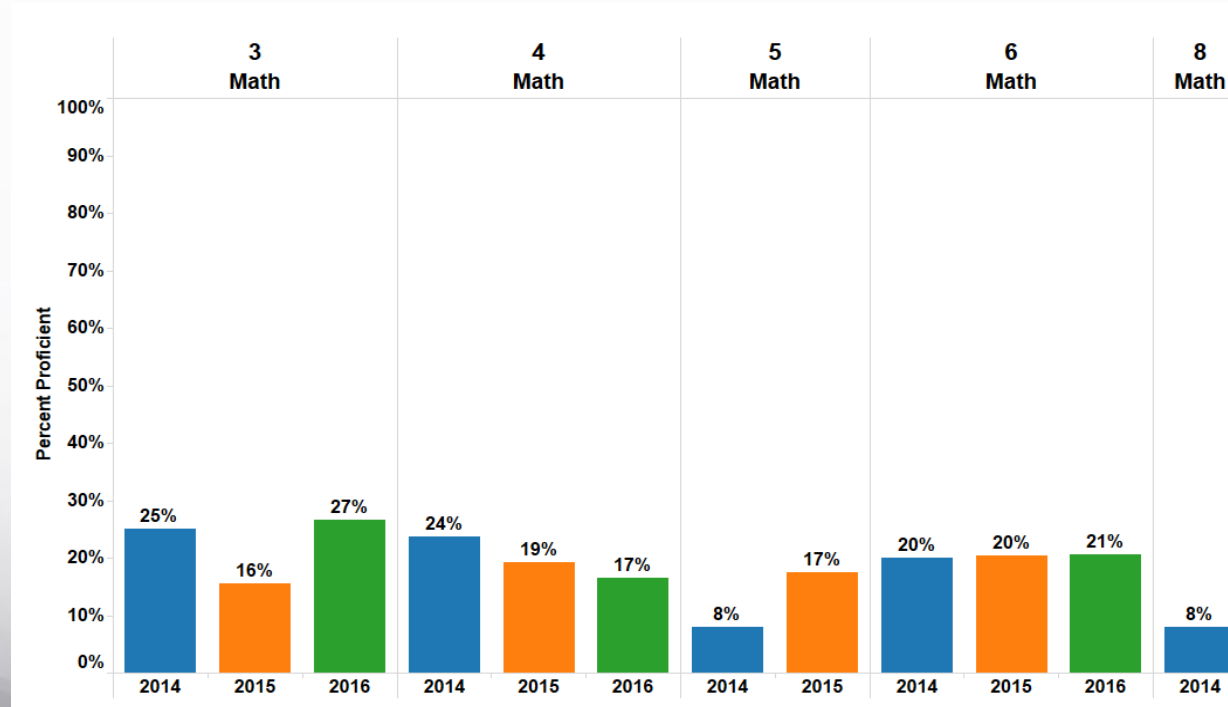
Sumter County Challenges

- Low proficiency scores and graduation rates result in failing schools
- % At or Above College Ready Benchmark for Sumter County



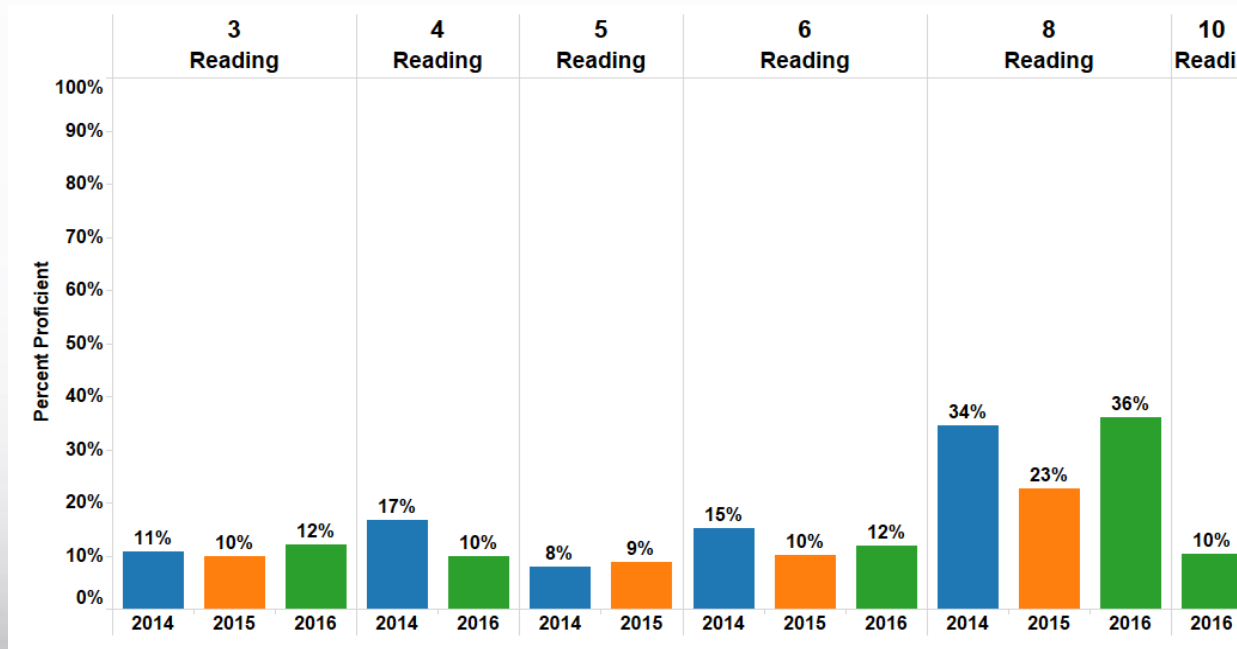
Sumter County Challenges

- **Lack of Innovation in the Classroom**
 - % Proficient in Math for Grades 3-8 in Sumter County



Sumter County Challenges

- **Lack of Innovation in the Classroom**
 - % Proficient in Reading for Grades 3-10 in Sumter County



Sumter County Challenges

REAL-TIME NEWS FROM AL.COM

Alabama high schools with lowest graduation rates

Posted August 16, 2017 at 06:00 AM | Updated August 16, 2017 at 06:01 AM

Graduation rates at Alabama high schools

After months of delays, the Alabama State Department of Education, [on Monday, Aug. 14, released](#) the overall graduate rate for 2016 and the rates for each of the public high schools in the state.

Listed below are the 25 lowest graduation rates in the state, per federal standards. The schools are ranked from the highest to the lowest.

The Alabama graduation rate is also included in the list. That calculation includes 1,202 students who took courses designated as "Essentials" courses that federal officials said could not be included in the federal rate because the coursework is not fully aligned with Alabama's college and career ready standards.

12th lowest in the state

SUMTER CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Sumter Central Federal Graduation Rate :

75.9%, (87.1% State Average)

Sumter Central State Graduation Rate:

78.8%, (89.2% State Average)



In the news.....



- <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/2015/01/10/247-wall-st-poorest-county-each-state/21388095/>

The poorest county in each state

Thomas C. Frohlich, 24/7 Wall St. Published 10:00 a.m. ET Jan. 10, 2015



(Photo: Thinkstock)

In each state, there was at least one county with a median annual household income more than \$7,000 lower than the state's median income. Virginia and Maryland had counties with median incomes over \$35,000 lower than that of the state. 24/7 Wall St. reviewed the poorest county in each state based on data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

The population of 24 of these poorest counties was predominantly rural. Eight had 100% rural populations. However, in some states, the poorest counties were largely urban. For example, the poorest counties in New York and Pennsylvania had 100% urban populations as of 2010.

These are the poorest counties in each state.

1. Sumter County, Alabama

- > County median household income, 2009-2013: \$22,186
- > State median household income, 2009-2013: \$43,253
- > Poverty rate, 2009-2013: 38.0%
- > Unemployment, 2013: 9.9%

Alabama had a median annual household income of \$43,253 over the five years through 2013, one of the lowest in the nation. A typical Sumter County households earned barely more than half of that figure, with a median annual household income of \$22,186 between 2009 and 2013. Sumter County also had one of the nation's highest poverty rates. Between 2009 and 2013, 38% of residents lived in poverty, versus the comparable national poverty rate of 15.4%.

In the news.....

- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2905611/A-North-South-divided-New-data-reveals-poorest-counties-America-household-incomes-35-000-lower-average.html>

Feedback



Tuesday, Aug 15th 2017 10AM 83°F

Daily Mail

.com

A North and South still divided: New data reveals the poorest counties in America, where household incomes are up to \$35,000 lower than the state average



Sumter County in Alabama was found to be the second poorest county in the US, with a median household income of \$22,186.

This is \$21,067 below the state's average of \$43,253 - and \$31,705 less than the amount typically earned by families across the country.

Background

- In September 2016, UWA Board of Trustees created an ad-hoc committee to **explore the possibility and feasibility of a charter school** to:
 - Provide **quality education** to the children of the region
 - Improve the University's ability to **recruit quality faculty and staff** (64% live out of county)
 - Improve the Region's ability to **recruit viable industry**
- In December 2016, feasibility and need were both confirmed, and Dr. Tucker was granted permission to proceed with an application to the Alabama Charter School Commission.
- In December 2016, a working group was formed and the application process began.
- UWA's role as a leader in not only Sumter County, but the Black Belt region as a whole, as well as their expertise in rural education, gave the exploratory committee, and the subsequent application team, the ability to craft a first-class vision for a school that will serve as a model for rural education.
- Submitted proposal to Alabama State Charter School Commission on May 1, 2017
- Stakeholders visited USDOE officials in August, 2017 to discuss educational opportunities for Sumter County and the region.
- Signed Charter School Contract on October 26, 2017.

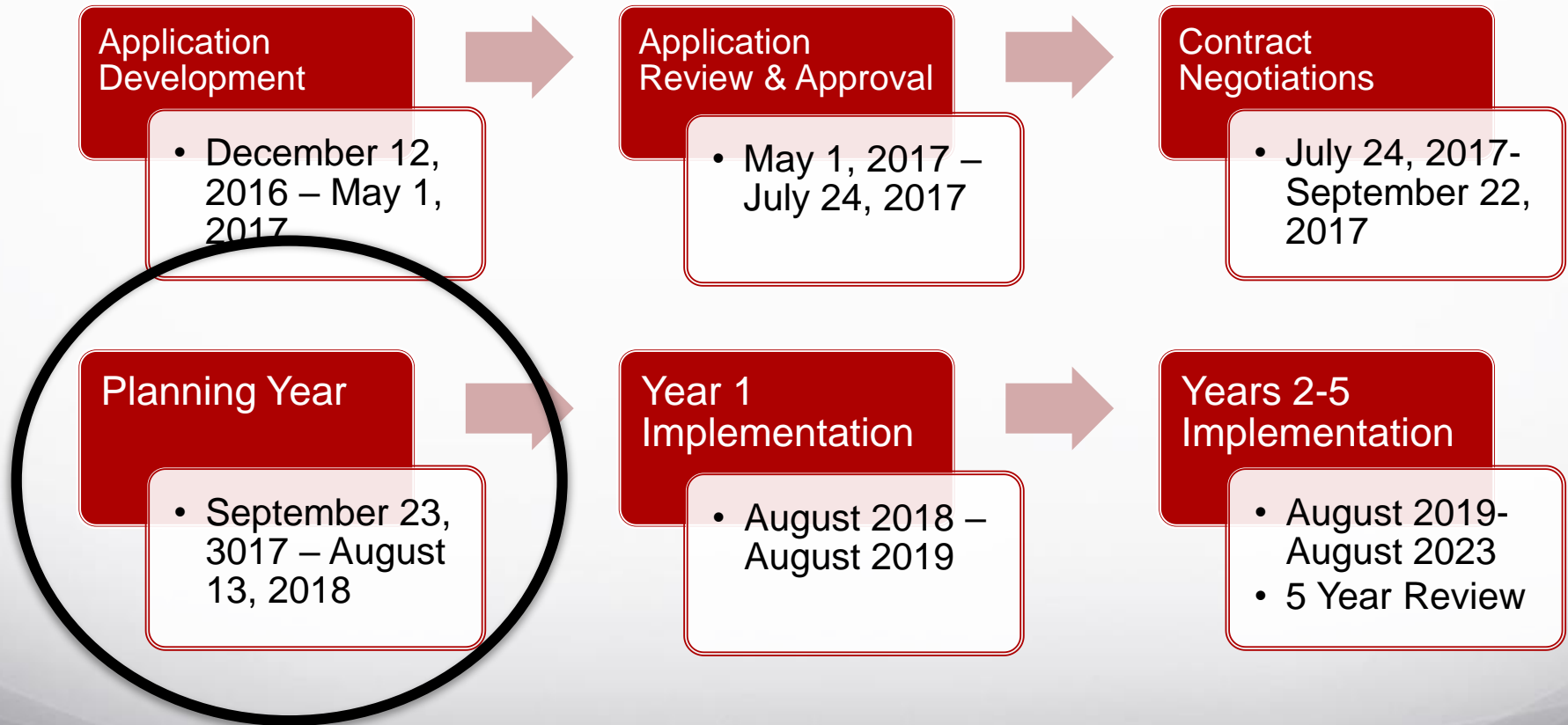
UWA/UCS Partnership

- UWA, lead facilitator of the UCS concept
- Transition of responsibility to UCS entity, its Board of Directors and Head of School
- UWA and UCS will be separate entities, with UCS having its own Board of Directors comprised of community and regional leaders and parents.
- The current Dean of UWA's College of Education will be a permanent yet ex-officio board member
- Cooperative Endeavour Agreement, UWA will allow UCS use of Lyon Hall and other facilities, as well as many other services and resources, reducing the financial burden and giving UCS the resources and assets that will allow the school to be more successful.
- The UWA College of Education is a leader in rural education and the benefits to UCS will include implementation of cutting-edge strategies, sharing of technologies, student-teacher assistance, and ongoing professional development for UCS faculty and staff.

What is a Public Charter School?

- Charter Schools are **public schools** that are free to be more innovative with their administrative policies (staffing, curriculum, and budget) and instructional time so that the academic needs of each child are met in exchange for greater accountability in improving student achievement (student performance).
- **Tuition-free**
- **Open Enrollment** : Open to any student who wants to attend and if a school's capacity is insufficient to enroll all applicants, a random lottery must be implemented.
- Funded by **public dollars** based on the number of students enrolled(ADM)

Project Timeline



UCS Board of Directors



Purpose of University Charter School

- National Rural School Model
- Rural Community Transformation
- Quality of Life
- Provide an Innovative, Quality, Rigorous and Safe Choice
- Laboratory for Best Practices
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Business and Industry Recruitment
- Climate of Inclusivity
- Community Partnerships

Guiding Principles & Core Values

- Diversity/Inclusivity
- Transparency
- Integrity
- Innovation
- Excellence
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking
- Creativity
- Character Education

UCS Mission

- The **mission** of University Charter School is to be a rural, diverse K-12 school that cultivates independent thought, promotes the building of character and civic responsibility and is committed to preparing all students for personal and professional success through the discovery of individual learning pathways in a rigorous and integrated Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STREAM) focused, project-based and place-based curriculum.

UCS Vision

- The **vision** of University Charter School is to become a collaborative rural model for producing adaptable learners that have a strong sense of place, mission, and rural identity who recognize the value of collaboration within a school, across a community, and between diverse rural regions.

UCS Difference

- **R³EACH**
 - “Rethinking and Renewing Rural Education, Achieving Collaborative Heights.”
 - The model embraces the idea that our nation’s challenges present real opportunities for rural places, and a sustainable American future must include a thriving rural landscape that has at its very core a thriving educational system which R³EACHes every child and guides him/her on a pathway to success in college, career, and life.
 - Big opportunities in a small rural setting

UCS Unique Qualities

- University “Sponsored” public charter school
- Location
 - University partnership with rural, impoverished community
 - Solution for unique challenges facing rural America
 - Located on a regional University campus
- Curriculum
 - K-12 best practice rural model
 - Project-based and Place-based learning
 - Autonomous, personalized learning
- Diverse by Design
 - Nurturing the diversity of a divided community
- Blueprint for other rural communities

Curriculum Highlights

- **Place-based/Project-based education (PBE)**

- PBE immerses students in local heritage, culture, ecology, landscapes, opportunities, and experiences as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects

- <https://www.edutopia.org/practice/place-based-learning-connecting-kids-their-community>

- <https://www.tetonscience.org/>

- **Learning in Personalized**

- Personalized learning recognizes that every learner is unique and the learning pathway must be as well. UCS students will use varied methods and pacing to both learn and demonstrate what they know.

- **Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, Mathematics (STREAM)**

- STREAM is an expansion of STEM. It is an acronym for Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, the Arts and Math. We have taken the principals of STEM infused reading across all subjects and added the arts to provide students the creative thinking skills necessary to communicate and advance STEM in the real world.

- **Technology Integration**

- Technology Integrate is the use of technology resources -- computers, mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, digital cameras, social media platforms and networks, software applications, the Internet, etc. -- in daily classroom practices, and in the management of a school.

Curriculum Highlights

- **Character Education/Development**

- Character integration and development includes and complements a broad range of educational approaches such as whole child education, service learning, social-emotional learning, and civic education
 - <http://www.theleaderinme.org/what-is-the-leader-in-me/>

- **Dual Enrollment**

- To graduate, all students will must complete at least 3 hours of dual enrollment credit. UCS will promote postsecondary technical or academic dual enrollment beginning in the ninth grade. (up to 58 hours)

- **Integrated College and Career Readiness Platform-**

- The Integrated College and Career Readiness Platform exposes students to career options to allow them time for discovery to encourage them to find their own pathway, as well as, career clusters to help them understand the opportunities that are available to them.

- **Community Partnership:**

- University Charter School is the result of a an innovative collaboration between the University of West Alabama, a rural, regional public institution of higher education, and the surrounding community.

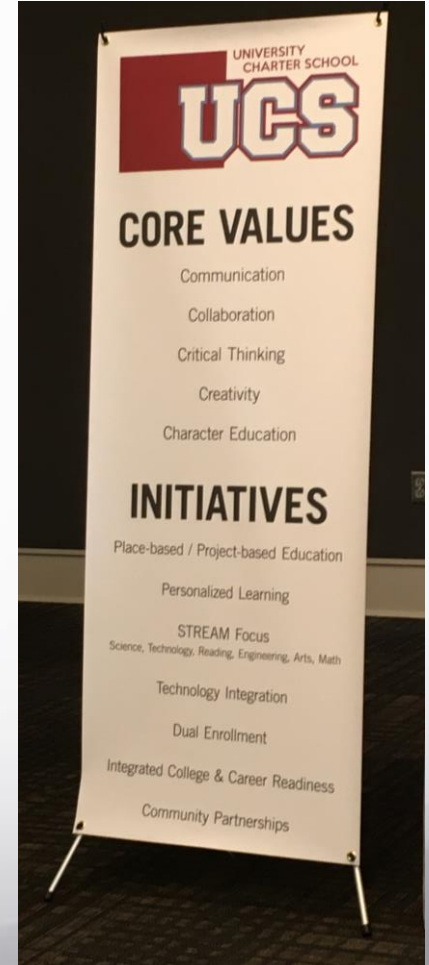
Importance of Community

- **Word of Mouth : THE MOST VALUABLE** form of marketing and the one that consumers trust above all else
- **Build a community** around UCS and that will drive support for your entity, and in turn UCS will be supported and used by community members.
- **Perception is EVERYTHING!** Perception allows you to maximize your return on investment
- Emphasize the importance of **loyalty, authenticity, and innovation** to the MISSION.
 - Defend the MISSION in your local communities
 - Be honest about the value of UCS and give valuable feedback
 - Help UCS innovate when necessary

Support for University Charter School

- Initial \$250,000 Goal
- Secondary \$300,000 Goal
- \$357,150 secured as of May 1, 2017
- \$434,000 secured as of January 31
- ~65 donors averaging ~\$7,000 per donor
- Support received from local parents, citizens, business and industry, faith-based organizations and leaders, public officials, and educational and community leaders

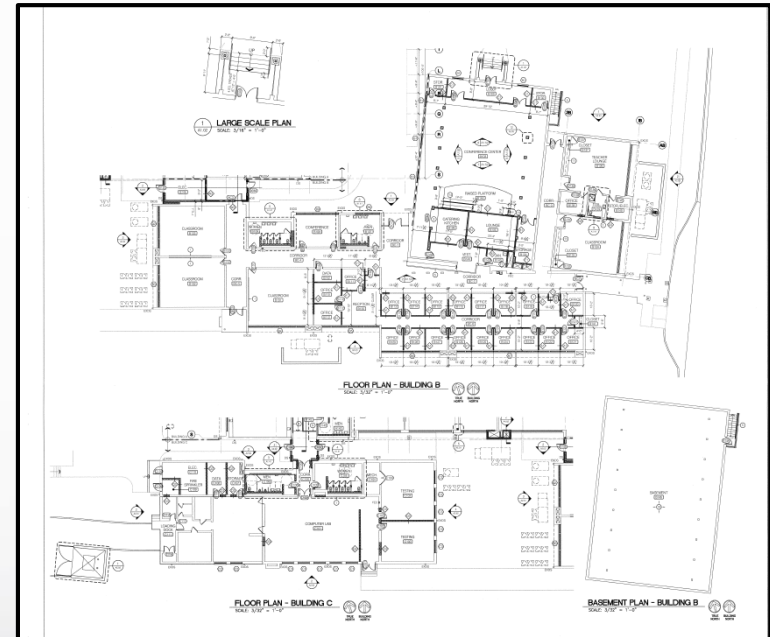
Contract Signing



Highlights of Contract

- Opening grades structure = PK-8th grade, August 2018
 - Add an additional grade each year, PK-12 in 2022
- UWA's Lyon Hall is temporary home
- Opening capacity of 350 students, expecting ~300
- Pre-Registration:
 - Sumter County Residents = Nov 15-Dec 13
 - Non-Sumter Count Residents = Jan 3 – Jan 31
- “<https://universitycharterschool.schoolmint.net/signin>”

UCS Facilities, UWA's Lyon Hall



Marketing and Branding

- University Charter School Website
 - <http://www.universitycharterschool.org/>
- Facebook
 - <https://www.facebook.com/universitycharterschool/>
- Friday Facts Facebook Campaign
- Promo Video



Questions?

- Facebook @UniversityCharterSchool
- www.universitycharterschool.org
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